

Harvard Allston Task Force
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 26th, 2006
Honan-Allston Library
6:30 p.m.

I. Attendance:

Harvard Allston Task Force

Paul Berkeley
Mary Helen Black
Cathleen Campbell
John Cusack
Rita DiGesse
Brian Golden
Michael Hanlon
Millie Holcum McLaughlin
Bruce Houghton
Brighton Lew
Harry Mattison
Ray Mellone
Tim Norton
Valter Vitorino

Mayor's Office

Paul Holloway

Boston Redevelopment Authority

Gerald Autler
Linda Kolwalcky

Harvard University

John Audi
Harris Band
Jim Barrows
Chris Gordon
Gary Hammer
Kevin McCluskey
Andy O'Brien
Dan Rabinovitz
Alison Reinhardt
Kathy Spiegelman

II. Minutes

Gerald Autler began the meeting by introducing himself and Linda Kolwalcky from the Boston Redevelopment Authority. Gerald introduced the representatives from Harvard who were in attendance at the meeting. The Task Force members each introduced themselves.

Gerald initiated discussion on how the Task Force members wanted to see the Task Force operate. The majority of members expressed interest in selecting a Chair. Paul Berkeley nominated Ray Mellone to chair the Task Force and the majority of the members agreed. Ray was designated as chair of the Task Force.

Ray expressed his interest in having an agenda for every meeting that was concise and identified what items of business were going to be discussed. Ray also would like the minutes for the meeting to be recorded to keep track of items discussed and anything that needs further discussion. Ray expressed a desire to have a refresher discussion on the implementation plan and matters that were left unfinished and needed further review from previous community meetings. Gerald and Ray are to discuss this further.

Gerald suggested that the Task Force should meet two times a month. Ray asked that meetings be held on Monday nights and Cathy Campbell suggested that the Task Force accommodate his request because he is the Chair. However, not every Task Force member can make Monday nights. A suggestion was made to alternate between Mondays and Wednesdays every other meeting. Paul mentioned that the third Wednesday of each month is not ideal because that is when the Allston Civic Association holds their meetings. Harry Mattison requested that the meeting time be pushed back to 7:00 p.m.

Gerald suggested that the Task Force may want to form sub-committees and Ray agreed. Gerald and Ray decided to discuss this further at a later time.

It was decided that the BRA, with Harvard's assistance, would be responsible for recording the meeting minutes at each meeting.

Gerald stated that the Task Force is charged with reviewing "Harvard's Plan for Allston"—specifically the Institutional Master Plan (IMP) Harvard will submit to the city of Boston. Other plans—notably the North Allston Neighborhood Strategic Plan and Harvard's Allston Campus Master Plan being developed by the consulting firm of Cooper, Robertson and Partners—will inform the content of the IMP.

Gerald explained that Harvard has an existing Allston IMP that expires on July 2006 that does not include Harvard's non-institutional land holdings in Allston. This IMP will most likely be extended, which is a fairly simple process.

Gerald referred Task Force members to the document "A Citizens Guide to Development Review" in the agenda provided for the meeting. Gerald specified that Article 80 is the portion of the zoning code that describes the BRA review and approval process. This information can also be found on the BRA web site.

Gerald stated that Harvard has not yet filed its IMP Notification Form (IMP NF) with the BRA. Typically, the Task Force review process starts when the Institution files its IMP NF so the Harvard Allston Task Force is ahead of the formal review process and as a result the Task Force will have the opportunity to provide input in advance of the formal review. The Task Force is the official advisory entity designated by the Mayor's office and the BRA to review Harvard's IMP. The Task Force will be the channel of communication between the community, the BRA, and Harvard.

Harry inquired about what lines of communication the Task Force would use to communicate among the members. Gerald responded that the meeting minutes will be provided to the Task Force members and will be posted for the community.

Ray mentioned that many of the Task Force members are representing particular groups or organizations and inquired about the option of sending a delegate in the Task Force member's place if the Task Force member cannot make a meeting. Gerald agreed that it would be ok to send a delegate as an observer but advised against having the delegate perform any functions of the absent Task Force member because of the important working relationship that will develop between the Task Force members.

Gerald turned the meeting over to Kathy Spiegelman, Chief Planner for the Allston Initiative at Harvard University.

Kathy reported that Harvard's planning for Allston is now being conducted under the entity the Allston Development Group. Chris Gordon is the Chief Operating Officer for the Allston Initiative and he will report directly to Harvard University President Larry Summers. Kathy stated that there is an Allston Room Exhibit in the arcade of Holyoke Center established for providing information on the planning concepts developed by the Master Plan consulting firm Cooper Robertson and Partners. Kathy suggested that all the Task Force members tour the room.

Kathy presented 5 boards displaying some of the planning options currently being considered.

1. Location options for Harvard's Professional Schools: the Graduate School of Education and the School of Public Health.
2. Location options for science building initiatives.
3. Arts and cultural activities.
4. Location options for Graduate housing.
5. Location options for Undergraduate housing.

Kathy informed the members that Cooper Robertson and Partners has added the consultant Project for Public Spaces to their team. Project for Public Spaces is led by Fred Kent and is known for its work around the world for its planning and urban design projects for public spaces. Harvard and Project for Public Spaces are planning a public workshop for Wednesday, February 15th to get community feedback on possible public realm improvements for Barry's corner. (Since this date is the third Wednesday in February and therefore a date for an ACA meeting, the schedule may have to be adjusted.)

Michael Hanlon inquired whether Harvard is giving itself a deadline to settle the Charlesview negotiations. Kathy answered that Harvard does not have a deadline.

Ray inquired why the land in the CSX rail yard is not being considered for the first phase and Kathy answered that the programs that President Summers has identified for the first phase are needed within the next 10-15 years and that the time frame for which Harvard will have access to the CSX rail yards is too far out.

Ray mentioned that there were holes in the implementation plan for the North Allston Strategic Plan and that the traffic and the transportation issues were going to be the most difficult to overcome. Kathy mentioned that the Task Force should keep the long term impacts and big picture issues in mind while simultaneously thinking about shorter term projects.

Gerald stated that the BRA will proceed soon with the “special study areas” analyses recommended in the North Allston Strategic Plan. Ray brought up the question as to who will complete the studies, who will review them and who will analyze them. Gerald answered that the BRA will be taking the lead and that additional discussions with the Task Force will occur as the studies proceed.

Kathy said that Harvard is trying to analyze the economic development issues associated with the North Allston Strategic Plan and, in the interest of balancing the community’s needs and interests with Harvard’s plan, will seek feedback from the Task Force. Kathy emphasized that Harvard’s inclination to want to file an IMPNF with the city quickly should not make the Task Force feel that they are being eliminated from the process. In actuality once the IMPNF is filed the process is just getting started.

Harry inquired whether the Task Force will be reviewing a single plan or whether the plan will come incrementally and the Task Force will review each step. Kathy answered that Harvard will not be able to have the entire master plan finalized in time for the first filing. She mentioned that every time she speaks of the North Allston Strategic Plan she speaks of it as a gift to the University and a great example of how the community and Harvard can work together toward mutual goals.

Paul inquired about Harvard’s process for architect selection and emphasized that a lot of people in the community do not want to see another One Western Avenue. Kathy answered that from the moment the architect selection process began for the first science building in Allston, Harvard was thinking about what could be done to ensure that the University doesn’t build another building that the majority of people don’t like. Kathy informed the members that Harvard currently has the architect selection process narrowed down to two architects and that Harvard is hoping to finalize its decision within the next month or so. Kathy emphasized that once an architect is brought on board the architect becomes part of the conversation with the community as well.

Ray stated that with the IMP filing the Task Force can look at the boundaries that Harvard is proposing for its campus and emphasized that Harvard will not gain rights for institutional

development outside of those boundaries, unless the University amends the IMP in a public review process.

Kathy informed the members that Harvard had purchased the Citizens Bank building and that one of the uses under consideration for the building is temporary space for the Fogg art museum while the Fogg's current location undergoes renovations. This will be one of the first things Harvard will seek input on from the Task Force.

Michael Hanlon asked if there were any new developments regarding possible construction of undergraduate student housing at the current athletics area or on the Harvard Business School campus. Kathy replied that the schedule for undergraduate housing is less urgent than the schedule for science. Kathy further stated that there is not an immediate need to move undergraduate housing over to the Allston campus, but that such a move is likely at some point in the future and that a location proximate to the river may require decking over Soldier's Field road. Kathy inquired about what decking over Soldier's Field road meant, and Kathy explained that it meant submerging the highway and decking over it to provide direct access to the riverfront.

Paul inquired about how many staff people from the Fogg might be brought over if it is temporarily moved to the former Citizen's Bank building. Paul thought that it might be a good idea to try and relocate it somewhere on Western Ave because a lot of the small businesses are hurting economically and if the Fogg brought staff people over it might be beneficial to the businesses. Kathy responded that Harvard would look into this.

Ray inquired about whether all meetings would be kept open or whether they would be allowed to go into Executive Session. Gerald stated that all meetings would be kept open to the public and all meetings would be scheduled in advance. Gerald said that there were no restrictions about Task Force members seeing each other and discussing Task Force issues, and that subcommittees may choose to meet on their own, but all regularly scheduled Task Force meetings would be open to the public.

It was decided that Harvard would offer Allston Exhibit Room tours to the Task Force members on Monday, January 30th and Wednesday, February 1st. Harvard would arrange for a shuttle to pick up Task Force members at 6:30 p.m. in front of the Honan-Allston Library and bring them to Holyoke Center for a tour and then back to the Library at 8:00 p.m.

The next Task Force meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 13th at 7:00 p.m. at the Honan-Allston Library and the public workshop on Barry's corner is scheduled for Wednesday, February 15th (exact time and location to be determined).